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HARKINS

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## General Harkins — Storm Center

The case of General Paul Harkins is a distressing one. A campaign is building up in press reports to remove him as the senior United States military officer in South Vietnam. The Pentagon has correctly analyzed the assault and has its back up. General Harkins will remain in Saigon, it is tartly announced, beyond his end-of-mission date next February and beyond his scheduled retirement next June.

There is the smell of battle in the air.

Some of the conflict is now old business. General Harkins was reporting to Washington and setting policy independently of Ambassador Lodge. This is a continuing weakness in American operations abroad. The various power systems in Washington—especially Defense, State, and CIA—have often projected their individual authority directly into countries like Vietnam and worked contrary to one another. Congress has often abetted this system by playing one executive department off against another, for reasons of its own, without fully grasping the consequences.

It now seems that Mr. Lodge has ended this dual authority. General Harkins will not be cut off from the Pentagon but policy in Saigon will be unified. This is good.

But the conflict now rages on another front. General Harkins is

correctly said to have sympathized with the Diem regime. Some of the Vietnamese generals, now in control of the government, are said to feel he will be out of sympathy with the aims of the new regime.

This does not get to the root of the matter.

General Harkins is a traditional American soldier. He was trained scrupulously to stay out of politics, and to work with constituted authority, in the best American tradition.

But in Vietnam the United States is involved in a new kind of war. Modern guerrilla operations require the commanding general and his staff, right down to the village level, to concern themselves as much with political warfare as with military. Sometimes more. This is hard for civilians to grasp but has often been explained in the columns of this newspaper. It is a technical fact.

General Harkins did not have the training and background for this. He seems not to have understood it in the earlier stages of his mission. He may or may not, now. It is better for those at a distance not to take sides on the matter of the individual. The Pentagon is learning, too.

But the United States must stand with the new generals in Saigon who obviously do understand the large political component of guerrilla war.